

# GOTHAM MOVIEMAKING RENAISSANCE

By LEONARD SPINRAD

AS a motion picture production center, New York is about a generation older than Hollywood. This entitles chroniclers of the current metropolitan film scene to describe the burgeoning state of affairs along the Hudson as a renaissance. Motion picture production here is apparently renewing its vitality.

A couple of years ago, the New York State Department of Labor reported pridefully that New York's 11,000 film workers were second only to California's 25,000. Since then, things have been picking up hereabouts, thanks to not only the voracious appetites of TV filming but also to renewed theatrical production. At the Warner Brothers studios in Brooklyn—part of which are used by the National Broadcasting Company for color spectacles—the forthcoming theatrical feature, "Patterns," was recently committed to celluloid. Elia Kazan's "Baby Doll" company did its interior shooting there and Alfred Hitchcock and his troupe will be on the premises for Mr. Hitchcock's next opus, "The Wrong Man."

Louis de Rochemont has leased the erstwhile Mount Eden Theatre in the Bronx as the production facility for his forthcoming Cinemiracle wide-screen productions. And, Cinerama's original operation at a converted indoor tennis court in Oyster Bay, L. I., also must be counted within the metropolitan New York orbit.

## Bronx "Lot"

The old Edison studios in the Bronx, including a 100-by-75-foot sound stage, recently were purchased by a group whose studio manager is to be Jeffrey Selznick, son of David O. Selznick. Present plans for the studio mainly call for television filming, but the facilities for theatrical work are there, too.

The ever-present aegis of television is involved in construction of Manhattan's largest new studio space on West Twenty-sixth Street, where Production

Center, Inc., will offer three 100-foot sound stages — one of these are not designed for use in the manufacture of feature films. Size is an important consideration. So, too, is the availability of construction and storage space for large banks of scenery.

The one-time Paramount studios at Astoria, Queens, which were taken over for motion picture purposes by the Army, continue as a major production resource of the metropolis to-

Hollywood itself uses many sound stages of bygone days as storage facilities these days. It is this "backstage" space pressure that has been a major deterrent to continued expansion of New York accommodations.

## Basis for Revival

Two principal factors have led to the current Manhattan activity. The first is technical. When the early talking pictures were being made in New York, there were all kinds of sound-recording problems because of city noises, ranging from the rumble of passing trucks to the blasting at new subways and building foundations. This, combined with space restrictions, led to the virtual eclipse of theatre film work hereabout. But today, the perfection of microphones, acoustic installation and selective sound tracking have greatly diminished the early problems.

It was not accidental that the first demonstration reel for CinemaScope offered scenes of New York City. Year after year, the metropolis is the setting for every form of drama. And, the moviemakers have been finding more and more merit in shooting dramas in their natural habitat.

The mammoth demands of television have given employment to thousands of film workers—actors, animators, camera crews—in New York as well as in Hollywood; but, more importantly, this generally steady work has created the beginning of a pool of technical talents that is vital to motion picture production.

No great challenge to Hollywood has yet been posed. But the motion picture people in this area are inclined to think that, after being nearly counted out, New York has finally hit the film comeback trail.

day, although the Signal Corps Photographic Center is confined to its own particular sphere of operations.

Listings of motion picture producers and studios in New York occupy almost two full small-type pages in the Manhattan classified telephone directory. But this impressive quantity may be misleading. Many of the Manhattan studios are small sound-recording establishments, rather than full-fledged motion picture studios.

The newsreel companies, the film laboratories and the major television producers maintain filming facilities that in one way or another can be part of